

NSC BRIEFING

19 July 1960

SOUTH KOREA

I. General elections on 29 July for the South Korean national legislature threatening to result in an unstable multi-party situation under the new parliamentary system of government.

- A. Some 1,766 candidates are running for the 233 seats in the lower house and the 58 seats in the new upper house.
- B. Four major parties, several minor parties and over 1,000 independents are competing.

II. Former Vice President Chang Myon is the leading campaign personality and his Democratic party is expected by most observers to win at least a plurality in the lower house.

- A. But prospects for a strong Democratic administration are clouded by factionalism which may split party after elections.

III. Wide open nature of campaign precludes any large-scale rigging, but there have been many individual violent incidents.

- A. Police have not recovered from downfall of the Rhee regime and lack former capability to maintain order. Martial law has been lifted to "provide a free atmosphere for the elections."
- B. UNCURK fielding 10 election observer teams to help assure fair election.
- C. Many former members of Rhee's Liberal party running as independents; a few apparently hope to gain legislative immunity from prosecution for past misdeeds.

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1. Hostile public opinion, including public demonstrations, has caused 20 of 54 candidates running under Liberal label to withdraw from race.
 - D. Left-of-center parties have emerged with about 150 candidates competing for lower house seats.
 - E. Present Premier Huh Chung is not seeking election and has disclaimed any political ambitions.
 1. He has announced he will retire from public life when new government is formed but he might be "available" for election to the presidency.
- IV. Overriding campaign issue is correction of abuses of Rhee regime, although outcome likely to be strongly influenced by local issues and loyalties, particularly in conservative rural areas.
- A. Relations with the US are not an issue.
 - B. Some socialists are attempting to make peaceful unification with North Korea an issue but response of conservatives and other socialists has been adverse.
 - C. Issue of relations with Japan is available for ready exploitation although it has not yet figured prominently in slow-starting campaign.
 - D. Chang Myon has publicly stated he will cut South Korea's 700,000-man armed forces to 400,000 and minimize defense budget if Democratic party wins.
 1. While Democrats have long advocated military reduction, this could be election gambit to attract votes of potential draftees and undercut similar promises of socialists.